

KEY POINTS IN PERSUADING

A common reason why attempts to persuade fail is the view of persuasion as a forceful bending to one's will. This conception leads to forceful measures, the exertion of strength through powerful argument, an emphatic voice, and a manner that brooks no opposition.

These methods do not work simply because ideas are not absorbed by being pounded in from the outside. They are grasped by being reached for from within. The trick is to get the other person to reach for them. And he first has to be receptive to absorbing ideas before he will reach.

This willingness to reach is indicated by an expression of wanting to know something. This might take the form of a question or an expression of doubt or uncertainty. You have to wait therefore with your implanting of ideas until you observe these signs of reaching.

How do you bring a person to reach? Simply by drawing him out. When he feels positive or definite about something, he is not receptive. Your best move at this point is to get him to talk about his position. When he exhibits his position, holes are likely to appear at points where he hasn't thoroughly worked it out. At these points he is likely to express doubt or uncertainty or a desire for information.

Now he is receptive. Now he is reaching for what you can give him. Now is the time for you to present your ideas. He is ready to absorb them.

And once the ideas are presented, feedback must be elicited to make the other person think; ideas have to be quantified; and in order to motivate him, benefits have to be given for adopting your point of view.

Emotions interfere with receptivity. They press for a giving out rather than a taking in. Therefore, emotions must be discharged before ideas can be implanted.

This clearing away of emotions must be attended to first not only when information is to be offered but even when advice and reassurance are to be given for the emotion. If the person is in a heightened emotional state, one must resist the temptation to immediately feed in reassurance. It simply doesn't work and is only likely to intensify the emotion.

One must first draw out until the other person is relatively calm. Then advice or reassurance can be applied. The other person has discharged his feelings and is much closer to receptive state. Now the person can be shown why the

situation isn't as bad as it seems. And if the other person asks a question or expresses some uncertainty, he will be all the more receptive to the suggestions or reassurance given.

These techniques require practice and patience while one goes through the awkward, struggling stage in acquiring facility in using them. And one must resist all habits that push toward doing the opposite. Getting through to the mind of another person is often a painstaking effort. But your making this effort with others can bring with it the pleasure and productivity of achieving a meeting of minds and mutual good feeling. While without it there is only "sound and fury".

James S. Nirenberg, Getting Through to People. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963.